

# A Call to Action Preparing for a Second Century of Stewardship and Engagement

A CALL TO ALL NATIONAL PARK SERVICE EMPLOYEES AND PARTNERS TO COMMIT TO ACTIONS THAT ADVANCE THE SERVICE TOWARD A SHARED VISION FOR 2016 AND OUR SECOND CENTURY

## Connecting People to Parks

## Advancing the NPS Education Mission

## Preserving America's Special Places

## Enhancing Professional and Organizational Excellence

- 1 **Fill in the Blanks** – Identify a national system of parks and protected sites (rivers, heritage areas, trails, and landmarks) that fully represents our natural resources and the nation's cultural experience. To achieve this we will work with communities and partners to submit to Congress a comprehensive National Park System plan that delineates the ecological regions, cultural themes, and stories of diverse communities that are not currently protected and interpreted.
- 2 **Step by Step** – Create deep connections between a younger generation and parks through a series of diverse park experiences. To accomplish this we will collaborate with education partners and youth organizations to create a pathway to employment with the NPS, with a focus on diversifying the workforce. We will involve at least 10,000 youth each year in a multi-year progression of experiences from education programs to internship/volunteer opportunities to employment.
- 3 **History Lesson** – Excite and involve new audiences in the exploration of the full diversity of the American experience by conducting history discovery events, projects, and activities that invite them to explore and share their heritage, using a variety of participatory methods, in at least 100 parks and programs.
- 4 **In My Back Yard** – Improve urban residents' awareness of and access to outdoor and cultural experiences close to home by promoting national parks in urban areas and ensuring safe and enjoyable physical connections from parks to a variety of sustainable transportation options aligned with urban populations' needs.
- 5 **Parks for People** – Enhance the connection of densely populated, diverse communities to parks, greenways, trails, and waterways to improve close-to-home recreation and natural resources conservation. We will achieve this by proactive Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Programs and collaborative park-based programs that develop a deeper understanding of communities' needs and connect citizens to the outdoors in the 50 largest urban areas and those with the least access to parks.
- 6 **Take a Hike, Call Me in the Morning** – Expand the health community's use of parks as a healing tool and increase citizen recognition of the value of parks to improve health and well-being by establishing 50 formal partnerships with health and medical providers across the country.
- 7 **Next Generation Stewards** – Create a new generation of citizen scientists and future stewards of our parks by conducting fun, engaging, and educational biodiversity discovery activities in at least 100 national parks, including at least five urban parks.
- 8 **Eat Well and Prosper** – Encourage park visitors to make healthy lifestyle choices and position parks to support local economies by ensuring that all current and future concession contracts require multiple healthy, sustainably produced, and reasonably priced food options at national park food service concessions.
- 9 **Keep the Dream Alive** – Foster civic dialogue about the stories of the civil rights movement found within the parks. The NPS will conduct a coordinated series of special events to commemorate significant 50th anniversaries of the civil rights movement (Civil Rights Act passage, "I Have a Dream" speech, etc.).
- 10 **Arts Afire** – Showcase the meaning of parks to new audiences through dance, music, visual arts, writing, and social media. To do so we will launch 25 artist-led expeditions that involve youth in creating new expressions of the park experience through fresh perspectives and new technology.
- 11 **Focus the Fund** – Increase the benefits of NPS community assistance by strategically focusing on the difference Land and Water Conservation Fund projects make in meeting outdoor recreation needs, especially close to where people live, for under-served communities and protecting lands, trails, and waterways. To do so we will expand online information and tools with our state and local partners, and provide to Congress a comprehensive report on the benefits and impacts of the Land and Water Conservation Fund in its first half-century.
- 12 **Follow the Flow** – Support communities' efforts to expand access to water-based recreation and to protect and restore waterways across the country by establishing a national system of water trails.
- 13 **Stop Talking and Listen** – Learn about the challenges and opportunities associated with connecting diverse communities to the great outdoors and our collective history. To accomplish this we will conduct in-depth, ongoing conversations with citizens in seven communities, one in each NPS Region, representing broadly varied cultures and locations. We will create and implement work plans at each location, which explore new approaches for building and sustaining mutually beneficial relationships with diverse communities.
- 14 **Value Added** – Develop awareness among the American public of the many ways national parks contribute to the economic vitality of our nation. To do so we will complete a study on the economic value of the full range of NPS activities and programs (visitor spending, ecosystem services, community assistance, tax benefits, etc.) and promote the results.

- 15 **A Class Act** – Help students develop a deep understanding of park resources and the relevance of parks in their lives through a series of park education programs. To do so we will adopt a class of 2016 graduates (grade school, middle school, or high school) at every national park and develop a series of fun, educational, and engaging activities culminating in the NPS Centennial in 2016.
- 16 **Live and Learn** – Provide multiple ways for children to learn about the national parks and what they reveal about nature, the nation's history, and issues central to our civic life. We will accomplish this by reaching 25 percent of the nation's K-12 school population annually through real and virtual field trips, residential programs, teacher training, classroom teaching materials, online resources, and educational partnerships.
- 17 **Go Digital** – Reach new audiences and maintain a conversation with all Americans by transforming the NPS digital experience to offer rich, interactive, up-to-date content from every park and program. To accomplish this we will create a user-friendly web platform that supports online and mobile technology including social media.
- 18 **Ticket to Ride** – Expand opportunities for students to directly experience national parks, where natural and historic settings inspire powerful learning. To achieve this we will provide transportation support for 100,000 students each year to visit national parks through collaboration with the National Park Foundation and other park fundraising partners.
- 19 **Out with the Old** – Engage national park visitors with interpretive media that offer interactive experiences, convey information based on current scholarship, and are accessible to the broadest range of the public. To that end we will replace 2,500 outdated, inaccurate, and substandard interpretive exhibits, signs, films, and other media with innovative, immersive, fully accessible, and learner-centered experiences.
- 20 **Scholarly Pursuits** – Sponsor excellence in science and scholarship, gain knowledge about park resources, and create the next generation of conservation scientists. To do so we will establish, through partner funding, an NPS Science Scholars program enabling 24 Ph.D. students from biological, physical, social, and cultural disciplines to conduct research in national parks each year.

- 21 **Revisit Leopold** – Create a new basis for NPS resource management to inform policy, planning, and management decisions and establish the NPS as a leader in addressing the impacts of climate change on protected areas around the world. To accomplish this we will prepare a contemporary version of the 1963 *Leopold Report* that confronts modern challenges in natural and cultural resource management.
- 22 **Scaling Up** – Promote large landscape conservation to support healthy ecosystems and cultural resources. To achieve this goal we will protect continuous corridors in five geographic regions through voluntary partnerships across public and private lands and waters, and by targeting a portion of the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund to make strategic land acquisitions within national parks.
- 23 **Go Green** – Further reduce the NPS carbon footprint over 2009 levels, and widely showcase the value of renewable energy. To accomplish this, we will foster sustainability in our parks and with our partners by reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 20 percent, including on-site fossil fuel usage and emissions due to electricity consumption.
- 24 **Invest Wisely** – Focus investments from all maintenance fund sources on high priority national park assets to address critical deferred maintenance and code compliance needs. By doing so we will correct the health and safety, accessibility, environmental, and deferred maintenance deficiencies in at least 25 percent of the facilities that are most important to park visitor experience and resource protection.
- 25 **What's Old is New** – Modernize historic preservation methods and technologies, show how historic structures can be made sustainable, and support efforts to rebuild the economic vitality of rural and urban communities by updating the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for the Treatment of Historic Properties in consultation with historic preservation partners.
- 26 **Back Home on the Range** – Return the American bison, one of the nation's iconic species, to our country's landscape. To achieve this we will restore and sustain three wild bison populations across the central and western United States in collaboration with tribes, private landowners, and other public land management agencies.
- 27 **Starry, Starry Night** – Lead the way in protecting natural darkness as a precious resource and create a model for dark sky protection by establishing America's first Dark Sky Cooperative on the Colorado Plateau in collaboration with other federal agencies, partners, and local communities.
- 28 **Park Pulse** – Assess the overall status of park resources and use this information to improve park priority setting and communicate complex park condition information to the public in a clear and simple way. To accomplish this, we will complete 50 "State of the Park" reports that synthesize monitoring information, resource inventories, facilities condition data, and visitor surveys.
- 29 **Posterity Partners** – Engage the power of philanthropy and volunteerism to provide legacy support for the NPS, both nationwide and at the individual park level. To do so we will launch a public campaign linked to the Centennial, and develop new tools, such as local or national endowments, to leverage sustainable philanthropic support from individuals and partnerships.
- 37 **Crystal Clear** – Protect the health of our watersheds by improving water quality, aquatic habitat, and ensuring adequate flows for public enjoyment. To do so we will work with partners to complete at least 30 research, restoration, water management, and flow protection projects that provide for public enjoyment and improve water quality and habitat.
- 38 **Enjoy the View** – Protect clean, clear air and spectacular scenery now and for future generations. To do this we will lead collaborative efforts in 10 parks creating Viewshed Cooperatives with other federal agencies, tribes, and local partners to assess air pollutants and preserve treasured viewsheds and natural and cultural resources.

- 30 **Tools of the Trade** – Provide employees the tools, training, and development opportunities needed to reach their full career potential. To accomplish this we will launch the NPS career academy with an online career planning tool and course offerings that teach essential competencies in 12 career fields. The academy will contain a leadership track common to all employees and focused on innovation, adapting to change, collaboration, and stewardship.
- 31 **Destination Innovation** – Accelerate the spread of ideas, encourage innovation, and inspire peer-to-peer collaboration across the Service. To achieve this we will create a network for innovation and creativity to rapidly share new insights and solve mission-critical problems using online tools such as blogs, discussion forums, and "wikis."
- 32 **Play it Safe** – Empower employees to use critical thinking skills in daily risk management decisions and encourage employees to embrace safety as part of their professional identity. To that end we will ensure that all NPS employees complete Operational Leadership training, implement Operational Leadership principles at parks and offices servicewide, and create an evaluation system to measure the effectiveness of Operational Leadership.
- 33 **Home Grown** – Recruit candidates to provide a source of diverse, motivated, and well-trained employees that reflect local communities by expanding the successful ProRanger and similar recruitment programs to all seven NPS Regions and to additional disciplines beyond visitor and resource protection.
- 34 **Team Buyin'** – Create contracting solutions better oriented to customer needs by designing, implementing, and evaluating a streamlined contracting and cooperative agreements process, using a team approach, in at least seven of the major acquisition and buying offices across the country.
- 35 **Welcome Aboard** – Create a more inclusive workplace where new employees can quickly navigate our organization to become highly productive. To do so we will implement an orientation and mentoring program for all new NPS employees that will complement the NPS Fundamentals course, use online tools, and provide individual support.
- 36 **Value Diversity** – Develop a workforce that values diversity and an inclusive work environment so that we can recruit and retain diverse employees and respond to the needs of the American public. As a first step, we will conduct a servicewide cultural diversity assessment and complete cultural competencies training for all supervisors.
- 39 **Lead the Way** – Engage our workforce by leveraging strong employee commitment, exceptional leadership, and improved management practices. To achieve this we will provide up to 50 parks or programs with customized assessments with tailored strategies for communications, recruitment, recognition, and career development.



### IMPLEMENTATION EMPHASIZES CHOICE.

While some of the actions require the involvement of every park and program, most do not. Program managers and superintendents will select actions that best fit the purpose of their program or park, workforce capacity, and skills, and that generate excitement among employees. Managers must also evaluate and prioritize current functions to decide which may be altered or discontinued in order to implement this plan.

FLEXIBILITY and CREATIVITY are encouraged. The plan identifies what to accomplish, but allows employees and partners to determine how to achieve the objectives through innovative strategies and approaches. The actions create opportunities for employees to share successes and learn from each other. The plan will be a living, breathing document on the path toward 2016 that will evolve as we learn together about the effectiveness of these approaches.

The work of the National Park Service is too dynamic and extensive to be fully reflected in this set of actions. The day-to-day business of running parks and programs across the Service will continue. *A Call to Action* should not limit us but instead serve as a catalyst for further creative steps on the path toward the second century of stewardship and engagement.

revised for 2013  completed  previously completed